

As Introduced

136th General Assembly

Regular Session

2025-2026

H. B. No. 627

Representative Stephens

To amend section 1517.14 of the Revised Code to 1
allow a board of county commissioners to 2
disapprove of certain scenic river designations. 3

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That section 1517.14 of the Revised Code be 4
amended to read as follows: 5

Sec. 1517.14. (A) The Subject to division (C) (4) of this 6
section, the director of natural resources may create wild, 7
scenic, and recreational rivers. The chief of the division of 8
natural areas and preserves shall supervise, operate, protect, 9
and maintain wild, scenic, and recreational rivers so created. 10
In creating wild, scenic, and recreational rivers, the director 11
shall classify each such watercourse as either a wild river, a 12
scenic river, or a recreational river. The chief may prepare and 13
maintain a plan for the establishment, development, use, and 14
administration of those rivers as a part of the comprehensive 15
state plans for water management and outdoor recreation. The 16
chief, with the approval of the director, may cooperate with 17
federal agencies administering any federal program concerning 18
wild, scenic, or recreational river systems. 19

(B) The director may propose to create a wild, scenic, or 20

recreational river that consists of a part or parts of any 21
watercourse in this state that in the director's judgment 22
possesses water conservation, scenic, fish, wildlife, historic, 23
or outdoor recreation values that should be preserved. 24

(C) (1) The director shall publish the intention to declare 25
a watercourse a wild, scenic, or recreational river at least 26
once in a newspaper of general circulation in each county, any 27
part through which the watercourse flows. The director also 28
shall send written notice of the intention to the legislative 29
authority of each county, township, and municipal corporation 30
and to each conservancy district established under Chapter 6101. 31
of the Revised Code, any part through which the watercourse 32
flows, and to the director of transportation, the director of 33
development, the director of administrative services, and the 34
director of environmental protection. The notices shall include 35
a copy of a map and description of the watercourse to be 36
designated. 37

(2) The director of natural resources shall post the 38
intention to declare a watercourse a wild, scenic, or 39
recreational river on the division of natural areas and 40
preserves' web site on the date of the initial publication under 41
division (C) (1) of this section. 42

(3) Any person having an interest in the proposed 43
declaration may file written comments to the proposal within 44
sixty days of the last date of publication or dispatch of 45
written notice as required under division (C) (1) of this 46
section. The director shall post on the division's web site the 47
last date by which written comments may be filed. 48

(4) Not later than forty-five days after the last date of 49
publication or dispatch of written notice as required under 50

division (C) (1) of this section, each board of county 51
commissioners having jurisdiction over any part through which 52
the watercourse flows may adopt a resolution to disapprove of 53
the designation of a scenic river. The board may adopt such 54
resolution at a regular meeting of the board or at a special 55
meeting called for the purpose of discussing such a resolution. 56
At least thirty days prior to the meeting at which a resolution 57
to disapprove a scenic river designation will be discussed, the 58
board shall provide public notice of the date and time of the 59
meeting by one publication in a newspaper of general circulation 60
within the county. 61

If any board adopts such a resolution, the board, in 62
writing, shall notify the director of the resolution. Such 63
notification shall be submitted within sixty days of the last 64
date of publication or dispatch of written notice as required 65
under division (C) (1) of this section. If the director receives 66
such notification, the director shall not designate such 67
watercourse as a scenic river. 68

(5) After sixty days from the last date of publication or 69
dispatch of written notice as required under division (C) (1) of 70
this section and subject to division (C) (4) of this section, the 71
director may enter a declaration in the director's journal that 72
the watercourse is a wild river, scenic river, or recreational 73
river. When so entered, the watercourse is a wild, scenic, or 74
recreational river, as applicable. The director, after sixty 75
days' notice as prescribed in this section, may terminate the 76
status of a watercourse as a wild river, scenic river, or 77
recreational river by an entry in the director's journal. 78

(D) Declaration of a watercourse as a wild, scenic, or 79
recreational river does not do either of the following: 80

(1) Affect private property rights or authorize the 81
director, chief of the division of natural areas and preserves, 82
or any governmental agency or political subdivision to restrict 83
the use of private land adjacent to the river or to enter upon 84
private land; 85

(2) Expand or abridge the regulatory authority of any 86
governmental agency or political subdivision over the river. 87

(E) The director may acquire real property or any estate, 88
right, or interest therein in order to provide for the 89
protection and public recreational use of a wild, scenic, or 90
recreational river. The director may enter into a lease or other 91
agreement with a political subdivision to administer all or part 92
of any publicly owned land that is administered by the division 93
and that is within the watershed of a wild, scenic, or 94
recreational river. 95

(F) A wild, scenic, or recreational river that was 96
declared as such by the director of natural resources under 97
Chapter 1547. of the Revised Code prior to ~~the effective date of~~ 98
~~this amendment~~ October 24, 2024, retains its declaration as a 99
wild, scenic, or recreational river for purposes of sections 100
1517.14 to 1517.19 of the Revised Code on and after that date. 101

Section 2. That existing section 1517.14 of the Revised 102
Code is hereby repealed. 103

Section 3. (A) Not later than ninety days after the 104
effective date of this section, any board of county 105
commissioners having jurisdiction over any part of a watercourse 106
that was designated as a scenic river on or after November 1, 107
2024, may adopt a resolution to disapprove of such designation. 108
The board may adopt such resolution at a regular meeting of the 109

board or at a special meeting called for the purpose of 110
discussing such a resolution. At least thirty days prior to the 111
meeting at which a resolution to disapprove a scenic river 112
designation will be discussed, the board shall provide public 113
notice of the date and time of the meeting by one publication in 114
a newspaper of general circulation within the county. 115

(B) If any board adopts such a resolution, the board shall 116
so notify the Director of Natural Resources. The Director shall, 117
in accordance with the procedures established in section 1517.14 118
of the Revised Code, terminate the status of such watercourse as 119
a scenic river. 120